

# Interpret Scripture with Scripture

**No scripture is to be interpreted without regard to the relation in which it stands to other sections of scripture.**

***“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:”*** Isaiah 28:9-10.

I believe that most of the theological errors of the past and present have grown out of, not so much a denial of God’s truth, but as a disproportionate emphasis of single verses or sections of scripture taken out of context. Consider this simple illustration;

The most comely countenance with the most beautiful features would soon become ugly if one feature were to grow while the others remained undeveloped. You can take the most beautiful baby there is in the world and if that baby’s nose were to grow while its head, eyes, cheeks, mouth and its ears remained undeveloped, it would soon become unsightly and unnatural. The same is true with every other member of its face. Beauty is mainly a matter of proportion and this is true of God’s Holy Word. It is only as His truth is presented in its proper proportions that the purity and structure of it are maintained in the hearts and minds of God’s people.

Unfortunately, almost everywhere today there is just one section of truth in the Word of God being disproportionately emphasized while the rest is being left out causing confusion and apostasy.

There can be no advance made in our spiritual apprehension of the truth in the Word of God until we are ready to submit our ideas and sentiments to the teaching of God’s Word. While we cling to our preconceived opinions and doctrines, we must be ready to abandon all beliefs not clearly taught in Scripture. There is nothing which God hates more than insincerity, and we are guilty if, while asking Him to instruct us, we at the same time refuse to relinquish what is erroneous and false according to His Word. A thirst for the Truth itself, with a candid determination for it to mold all our thinking and direct our practice, is indispensable if we are to prevent from being deceived in this world.

***“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”*** 2 Tim 2:15-16

We must also be completely dependent on the Spirit of God when seeking to interpret scripture. It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates our minds and spirits to understand the Word. He is the one who guides us into all truth (John 14:26, John 16:13-14, 1 John 2:20, 1 John 2:27). Whenever we study the Word we must cry out to God, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law” (Psalms 119:18).

So long as we remain in this evil world and the corrupt principle of the flesh continues in us, the wise believer needs to be led and taught by the Spirit. This is very evident from the case of David, for while he declared, “I have more understanding than all my teachers,” yet we find him praying to God, ***“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. . . . Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes. . . . Give me understanding”*** (Ps. 119:18, 33, 34).

Observe that the Psalmist did not complain at the obscurity of God’s Law, but realized the fault was in himself. Nor did he make a request for new revelations (by dreams or visions), but instead a clearer sight of what was already revealed in God’s Word.

The need for paying close attention to the context of the Word is a matter of extreme importance. Not only must each statement of Scripture be explained in full harmony with the general flow of its context, but more specifically, be in complete agreement with the common sense and tenor of the passage of which it forms a part. This “common sense” in Scripture must be diligently striven for. Few things have contributed more to erroneous interpretations than the ignoring of this obvious principle. By divorcing a verse from its setting or singling out a single clause, one may “prove” not only absurdities but real falsities by the very words of Scripture. For instance, a common biblical text is used out of context to argue that eating unclean animals has been now approved by God with Peter’s vision in Acts 10:11-15:

***“And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”***

Not only is this erroneous interpretation highly dishonoring to God and at direct variance with the plain teaching of the other scriptures, but it is refuted by the context. In order to understand Peter’s vision in Acts 10:11-15 you must also read the whole account in [Acts 10:1-11:18](#)

Also notice that Peter confirms the context by his explanation of his vision in Acts 10:28

***“Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.”***

Reading the account in Acts 10:1-11:18 shows this vision from God is about Peter and the Gentiles and not about Peter suddenly being allowed to eat unclean animals for the first time in his life. There is no Biblical record of Jesus or His disciples ever eating unclean creatures or saying that this command of God was abolished.

To a very large extent, and far more so than any uninspired book, the Bible is a self-explaining volume: not only because it records the performance of its promises and the fulfillment of its prophecies, but because all its fundamental truths may be discovered by means of its own contents, without reference to anything extra or outside itself. When difficulty is experienced in one passage it may be resolved by

a comparison and examination of other passages, or where the same or similar subjects are dealt with at greater length or explained more clearly. There are many places in the Scriptures which can be understood only by the explanations and amplifications furnished by other passages in Scripture.

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